

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OES-06 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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R 201244Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7848

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 12264

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: SPOP, PINT, IN

SUBJ: PRESIDENT AHMED ON FAMILY PLANNING

1. PRESIDENT AHMED OPENED A THREE-DAY SEMINAR ON FAMILY PLANNING ON AUGUST 18 IN CALCUTTA. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, AHMED ARGUED STRONGLY THAT THERE WAS NOTHING IN ISLAM THAT PROHIBITS FAMILY PLANNING. NOTING THAT THERE MIGHT BE FEAR IN THE MINDS OF PEOPLE ABOUT THE METHODS USED, HOWEVER, HE STATED: "WE HAVE TO ALLAY THIS FEAR AND SUSPICION. THIS COULD NOT BE DONE BY SHIFTING TARGETS, NOR BY SHIFTING POPULATION FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER, BUT COULD BE ACHIEVED ONLY THROUGH TRAINING, EDUCATION AND PROPAGANDA...WE MUST CREATE THE ATMOSPHERE TO MAKE FAMILY PLANNING UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTABLE...IF A PROPER APPROACH IS MADE TO THEM (COMMON PEOPLE) THEY WILL RISE ABOVE NARROW CONSIDERATIONS AND DO THEIR PATRIOTIC DUTY TO THE COUNTRY."

2. THE PRESIDENT REFERRED TO "MISCHIEVOUS PROPAGANDA" THAT FAMILY PLANNING WAS NOT PERMISSIBLE IN ISLAM, ADDING: "I CAN ASSERT WITH ALL THE EMPHASIS AT MY COMMAND THAT I HAVE NOT COME ACROSS ANY HOLY BOOK WHICH SAYS CHILDREN SHOULD BE PRODUCED THOUGHTLESSLY AND ALLOWED TO
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LANGUISH BECAUSE OF THE PARENTS' INABILITY TO TAKE CARE

OF THEM ADEQUATELY. NOR HAVE I COME ACROSS ANY RELIGIOUS
TENET WHICH PROHIBITS FAMILY PLANNING."

3. COMMENT: AHMED'S REMARKS ON THE NEED FOR
FAMILY PLANNING AS A PATRIOTIC DUTY AND HIS OPPOSITION TO
"COERCION" CLOSELY PARALLEL THE ARGUMENTS ADVANCED BY
PRIME MINISTER GANDHI AND HEALTH MINISTER KARAN SINGH,
AND HIS STATEMENT ABOUT FAMILY PLANNING NOT BEING IN CONTRA-
DICTION TO ANY RELIGIOUS PRECEPTS IS OBVIOUSLY DIRECTED AT
INDIA'S MUSLIM POPULATION. WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY
REPORTED ON THE PRESIDENT'S WIDELY-BELIEVED RESERVATIONS
ON THE SUBJECT AS WELL AS ON THE RESETTLEMENT OF OLD DELHI
RESIDENTS (NEW DELHI 11564); WE FIND IT STRIKING THAT HE
SHOULD HAVE COME OUT SO STRONGLY IN PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE
OF "SHIFTING POPULATION" AND ON "TARGETS" FOR STERILIZATION,
BOTH THEMES STRONGLY ASSOCIATED WITH SANJAY GANDHI.
SAXBE

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